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"THE HOUSE OF STAPLES"

UNMOVED BY SUICIDE

Suicide in the United States has increased to a startling degree, but, says The Living Church (Milwaukee), the really startling thing about it is that it does not startle serious-minded people. "It hardly awakens more remark than does the ordinary way of dying for one to read in the morning paper that some prominent banker or leading society woman has deliberately thrown life away. 'Poor man!' or 'poor woman!' we say; just as tho they had been 'taken off by pneumonia.'"

For facts the writer might have quoted the figures of Frederick L. Hoffman, appearing in the New York Tribune (November 4), showing that for the last year the rate of suicide has been higher than during any previous year for which approximately accurate data are available. "Against the rate of 18.8 to the 100,000 of population in 1907, the rate for 1908 was 21.8, or higher by over one point than the exceptionally high rate for 1904 of 20.7." The actual increase in the number of suicides during the year was 601, while the corresponding increase in the population during the same period was only 2.3 per cent. Returns from 65 cities show 3,853 suicides. Suicidal frequency is lowest in the small cities and highest in the large. Cities of Western States hold the highest rate, while those of the North Central States stand the lowest. About the character of the suicides Mr. Hoffman writes:

"An analysis of individual cases of suicide would seem to sustain the conclusion that the increase in suicidal frequency affects particularly the well-to-do, prosperous, and better educated elements of the population rather than the unfortunate, the ignorant, and the poor. Such a study of individual cases also reveals the fact of a close connection between suicide and crime in all its phases, particularly, however, crimes of a more serious character committed by men in high positions of responsibility, where the only alternative to escape punishment is the termination of life by self-murder. Finally, there is positive evidence of mental and physical deterioration, and in part, at least among those who have come from the country to live in the cities and to whom the intensity of city life, its opportunities for excitement and temptation prove disastrous, causing mental unbalance, nervous diseases, and material, moral, and spiritual discontent."

Turning to the religious aspects of the question, The Living Church observes:

"While it is wrong to exaggerate, it would seem that in our modern life we are developing a condition in morals similar to that of the Roman Empire in its decay. This is a day in which the materialistic philosophy of the last generation, altho it has run its course and died out of the schools, would seem to have filtered through into the common mind, and to have produced its legitimate fruit in materialistic living. Great fortunes have been piled up under social and political conditions favorable to the aggregation of wealth. The expenditure of vast sums on mere material advancement or sensual gratification has set the pace in the public mind, by making men generally think that material results are the be-all and the end-all of our civilization. "And not only has our civilization given the desire to the average man and woman to make an idol of enjoyment, but it has done much

to make comfort and gratification cheap and accessible; so that the poor have not only the desire but the ability to indulge in many things that were formerly the luxuries of the rich. Thus it is that 'the things that should have been for their wealth' have become to many an occasion of falling.

"Furthermore, the marvelous alleviation of suffering with which God has blest the studies and experiments of the physician has been perverted in men's minds into an idolatry of freedom from physical pain. So that physical ease has been elevated into a travesty of religion.

"And back of all this lies that great fallacy which is part of all modern development of religion; namely, that the individual intellect is supreme; that every man may think and believe as he pleases; that he owes nothing intellectually or spiritually to anything outside himself; that he has not only a right but a duty, as man to assert his manhood by adopting any religion he pleases, or no religion whatsoever, if that pleases him better."

The writer reviews the pitiful reasons that are given in numerous cases by those who make way with themselves. "A woman has frequent headaches and sees no prospect of getting rid of them. A man is refused in marriage by a young woman. A young woman is flitted by a worthless man. A business man loses his fortune. A person is overworked and nervously exhausted." These cases illustrate but the nemesis of that "spiritual freedom" claimed today by those who renounce any allegiance to a Superior Being. The writer continues:

"Free thinking, which, as commonly understood, is essentially lawless and immoral, results inevitably in free living; especially in an age when we have so many temptations to lawlessness and self-gratification. Given, then, a mind with no law but its own whim, it indulges itself in any way that it sees fit, in low and vulgar ways if its tastes are low and vulgar, in refined and intellectual ways if it cares for things refined and intellectual—but always with this underlying purpose of gratification in it all; with no thought of loyalty due to any higher Being, or of any debt of right to be paid to any fellow man. Then, when the objects of its gratification cease to gratify, when life has nothing further to offer, when to live longer with its thirst unquenched would be a torture, when actual or impending failure is written over all that it has loved; then the life which the man no longer values is pettishly or recklessly thrown away. Life is to me no longer worth living; therefore, I will not live."

An article in a recent number of the New York City Mission Monthly dwells upon the prevalence of child-suicide in Germany, which was treated at some length in our issue for July 3. Says the writer:

"Prevalence of suicide among children, in Prussia especially, is just now attracting public attention in Europe in an unusual degree, and some startling facts are being brought to light. It seems almost incredible that every year, according to reliable authorities, in Prussia alone about six hundred persons under the age of twenty take their own lives, and that among children under fifteen years of age the number of suicides annually runs between sixty and seventy. These are startling figures. This suicidal tendency is ascribed by some to the excessive strain of the German system of education. Professor Eulenberg, a well-known German physiologist and nerve specialist, thinks that the cause is rather to be found in the home. Lack of control, lack of insight, lack of understanding of the child soul, are, in his judgment, the real source of this serious phenomenon. There are others, however, who think that the suicide mania of so many children arises from the emotional literature which falls into their hands. There may be some truth in this latter supposition, for a great deal of reading matter is poured forth from the press, whose influence is most unsettling and pernicious."

NEW PACIFIC SHIP LINE PROJECTED

VICTORIA, B. C., Nov. 10.—The Canadian Northern Railway Company announced today that its Transpacific and Australian steamship service would be started from a new seaport to be established at Numakamis Bay, on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Four steamships will run to Hongkong and four to Australia.

This arrangement is subject to the ratification of its contract with the British Columbian Government to complete a transcontinental line to the Pacific Coast.

YOUTH.

I once might hear the fairies sing
Upon the feathery grass a-swing,
Or in the orchard's blossoming;
Their melody so fine and clear,
One had to bend his ear to hear,
Or else the music well might pass
For zephyrs whispering in the grass.

I once might see the fairies dance
A-circle in their meadow-haunts,
Soft-tapered by the new-moon's glance;
Their airy feet in crystal shoon
Made twinklings 'neath the silver moon
Such witchery, but that, 'twas seen,
Might well have been the dew-drop's sheen.

I've wandered far 'yond summer seas,
Where music dwells 'mid harmonies
That well the Seraphim might please;
But never more I catch ah me!
The fairies' silvery melody—
Their crystal twinklings on the moon-
lit sea.

—Thomas Nelson Page.

A POOR RULE.

Hypnotism seems able to coax the subject into the semblance of death, but not to coax him back, in time to evade rigor mortis and legal complications. It ought to work both ways or be inhibited from working at all.—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

EXPENSIVE FOR THE COMPANY.

Howell—I see that an accident insurance company has got after Rowell, who has run down so many people with his new automobile.

Powell—How it that?

Howell—The company has applied for an injunction restraining him from killing any more of its policy-holders.

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